United Nations S/2018/507

Security Council

Distr.: General
1 June 2018
English
Original: Arabic

Identical letters dated 27 May 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the fifty-first report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017) (S/2018/484).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regrets that the authors of the Secretary-General's reports and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continue to take a negative, politicized and hostile approach to the Syrian Arab Republic and its institutions. In the current report, they continue to ignore the concerns expressed by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in its responses to previous reports.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic finds it unacceptable that officials of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should continue to try to transform the reports of the Secretariat on the humanitarian situation in Syria from genuinely international reports into reports that serve the agendas of certain Western States that are hostile to Syria and have no concern with the humanitarian situation of Syrians, their real assistance needs, or alleviation of the impacts of the crisis on them. Such an approach is a violation of the principles of humanitarian work and a waste of United Nations efforts and finances. It detracts substantially from the credibility of the United Nations and the objectivity of its reports.

Reading the fifty-first report of the Secretariat raises numerous questions that are of concern not only to the Government, but to all Syrians and anyone concerned about the humanitarian situation in Syria. Here are some of those questions:

1. After submitting 51 reports, has the Secretariat not yet noticed that the people who run the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are violating the most basic principles of humanitarian work? We have in mind specifically the principle of non-discrimination. They focus on providing assistance to particular groups of Syrians to the exclusion of others, in implementation of instructions from Western States and extremist regimes in the region. They and their staff are also engaging in illegal intelligence-gathering activities that are prohibited by law.

2. What is the rationale for the insistence by the Secretariat and the authors of the reports on wilfully ignoring the horrific destruction and scorched-earth policy being pursued by the United States and its partners — in particular France and the

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United Kingdom — in the ravaged city of Raqqah? Those States' aircraft, allies and affiliated forces have destroyed that city's facilities (including schools, hospitals and other infrastructure), displaced hundreds of thousands of inhabitants, and murdered thousands. Do not those actions constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity?

3. Are the Secretariat and the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs incapable of instructing the authors of the report to avoid delving into issues that are not part of their mandate and to stop making major legal errors, such as using the term "the non-State armed opposition" to refer to terrorists from the Nusrah Front and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) deployed in Yarmuk camp, eastern Aleppo, Idlib, Dayr al-Zawr and other areas?

4. Why are the authors of the report afraid to call things in Syria by their names? Why do they not characterize what the Turkish regime is doing to civilians in Afrin and other regions as the aggression that it is and call it a violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations? Why are the authors afraid to include in their report an accurate characterization of the tripartite aggression being conducted by the United States, France and the United Kingdom against Syria? Why do the authors of the report not come out and say that the illegal intervention in Syria by the "international coalition" is an act of aggression, and that the crimes committed by that coalition are war crimes and crimes against humanity?

5. Who instructed the authors of the report to ignore the impact of years of unilateral coercive economic measures against Syria on the capacity of vital sectors to meet the needs and basic requirements of Syrians and mount an effective humanitarian response?

6. What are the authors trying to achieve by ignoring the fact that the Turkish attacks against Afrin are what is causing the displacement and suffering among that city's civilians? Why do the authors hurl false accusations against the Syrian Government for not doing enough to respond to civilians' needs when they know full well that the Syrian Government is the party providing assistance, support and mobile clinics for civilians affected by the Turkish aggression and facilitating numerous medical evacuations?

7. Is it not shameful that the authors of the report should commend the Brussels Conference, at which attendees spoke about Syria on behalf of Syrians, when the organizers didn't invite or even coordinate with the Syrian Government, even though the latter is the primary party responsible for the present and future of Syrians and for responding to their needs? How can the authors of the report ignore the scandalous preconditions laid out by donors at that conference for financing humanitarian operations and refurbishing major services facilities in Syria? Setting such conditions is completely at odds with the principles of humanitarian work and the relevant United Nations resolutions. How can the people who run the United Nations violate the Charter and the relevant resolutions by co-organizing and co-chairing the Brussels Conference, which was held without consulting or coordinating with the Syrian State, let alone inviting it to attend? The Syrian Government stresses that the Brussels Conference and its outcomes are illegitimate because the principal party, which is the Syrian Arab Republic, was not present.

8. Why do the authors of the report deliberately ignore the major facilities provided and efforts made by the Syrian State, which has taken on staggering burdens to ensure greater effectiveness in humanitarian operations and the delivery of assistance to the Syrians in need who are the rightful recipients? The Syrian Government is providing generous assistance and basic services to Syrians without discrimination, and providing the necessary facilities to its humanitarian partners.

9. Has it not become clear from the behaviour of officials of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs that they are systematically shrinking the United Nations response to the needs of Syrians in areas that are in the process of being liberated from the terrorists, even though before they were liberated, those areas were considered high priority and those same officials launched campaigns and appeals for the delivery of humanitarian aid to them? That is what has happened in eastern Aleppo and other places.

10. Do not the Secretariat and its staff have an obligation to refrain from falling into line behind United States, British and French propaganda campaigns concerning the alleged use of chemical weapons in Duma?

11. Will the Secretariat demand that persons from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Israel who are proven to have supported terrorism and played a role in the war against Syria and the suffering of its people be turned over to the International Criminal Court and held accountable under international law?

12. Has the Secretariat not noticed the selective and politicized approach whereby the authors of the report have relied on sources of information provided by certain armed terrorist groups and certain politicized United Nations personnel? At the same time, they ignore or cast doubt on any information supplied by Syrian Government sources and even the reports of certain objective United Nations staff residing in Syria.

The Syrian Arab Republic puts these questions to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and looks forward to receiving detailed and clear replies as soon as possible.

The Syrian Government stresses to the Secretariat that the "collapse", or limitation, in the ability of the United Nations is not due to limited access or any of the other reasons alleged by the authors of the Secretariat reports and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It is rather due to the politicized approach adopted by the authors of the report and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, who have allowed hostile agendas to trump the humanitarian and legal principles that are supposed to be guiding their work when dealing with the humanitarian situation in Syria.

The Syrian Government stresses to the Secretariat that it would be unfortunate if, now that eastern Ghutah has been liberated from terrorism, it receives the same treatment by the United Nations as was the fate of eastern Aleppo, Homs, Zabadani and other areas, which saw a reduction of humanitarian aid to the lowest levels that did not meet their minimum needs. We believe that neither the Secretariat nor the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should satisfy themselves with following such an approach in Syria.

A professional and objective assessment of the humanitarian situation in Syria depends on the extent to which the Secretariat uses qualified humanitarian professionals who follow genuine and non-politicized humanitarian practice and are not subject to Western pressure. That is the approach that should be taken on all tracks when it comes to the situation in Syria, including a political settlement.

Lastly, we believe that it is neither politically nor professionally acceptable that this report was provided to the Syrian side so shortly before the date set for its consideration by the Security Council, unless the goal is to prevent Syria from responding to the report and expressing its opinion as part of a democratic and responsible process. The members of the Security Council have a duty to put an end to this kind of practice.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mounzer **Mounzer**
Minister Plenipotentiary
Chargé d'affaires a.i.